

**TOGETHER  
NETWORK<sup>+</sup>**

# 2021 Annual Report

Data drawn from the Together Network end of year Core members survey

# The Together Network

Founded and convened by Church Urban Fund, the Together Network is a growing network of Christian charities, large and small, that are committed to tackling poverty and transforming communities.

**This ecumenical 'faith in action' movement with members across England, resources and equips churches across multiple denominations.**

**There are 15 Core members:**

- Birmingham- Thrive Together Birmingham
- Chester- Transforming Lives Together
- Cornwall- Transformation Cornwall
- Coventry- Together for Change
- Leeds- Wellsprings Together
- Leicester- Together Leicester
- Lichfield- Transforming Communities Together
- Liverpool- Together Liverpool
- Manchester- Greater Together Manchester
- Middlesbrough- Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland
- Newcastle- Transforming Communities Together: Tyne to Tweed
- Norfolk- Imagine Norfolk Together
- Nottingham- Transforming Notts Together
- Plymouth- Transforming Plymouth Together
- Sussex- Together in Sussex

## Our impact in 2021

766

Churches supported

80,293

People supported

863

Projects supported

126

Projects established

55

Networks coordinated

*'There are many benefits, but some key ones have been the ability to share experiences, wisdom and ideas together; the ability locally to coordinate responses and collaborate on activity so that we don't duplicate and having a sense of solidarity with others doing similar work.'*

**-Jon, Transforming Communities Together**

\*Due to the scale and diversity of our Together Network partners and their projects these numbers are estimates based on reported data.



# Survey responses

In a year marked by communities working to recover from the challenges of Covid-19 yet now facing a cost-of-living crisis, Together Network members reflect on the progress that has been made despite adversity.

## Considering your work over the last year what are you most proud of?

### - Together Middlesbrough & Cleveland

'Surviving to move beyond recovery and continue to respond to the increased needs of our community!'

### -Transforming Notts Together

'I am most proud of how the team have continued to respond to the growing needs in our communities and give of themselves over and over to support people.'

### - Transformation Cornwall

'Successful delivery of the Meet the Funders program despite Covid-19 related challenges.'

### - Together for Change Coventry & Warwickshire

'The new community hub we have created for Nuneaton churches... whilst Saints was closed for much of 2020-21, we took advantage of the situation by pressing on with refurbishment including creation of a kitchen and Saints student lounge. So we were ready to serve large numbers of disadvantaged young people and families from November 2021.'

## Diversity and Inclusivity

### - Transforming Plymouth Together

'A new citywide 'Unify' partnership with the aim of creating more inclusive and diverse communities across 3 wards which were identified by the local authority as having particular issues in this area. TPT employed 3 Community Connectors who each increased engagement within these city locations, and also ran successful community events... there remains a committed community group in each ward to carry on the work.'

### - Wellsprings Together

'Through Surge we funded five local partners working with UKME groups (Black, British Asian, Afghan and Eastern European) to address issues around vaccine take up and Covid-19 related issues. By working through trusted partners we were able to support public health messaging and save lives though people making different choices.'

### Collaboration

#### - Together Liverpool

'We've worked hard to bring clarity to the work that we do and better understand how we support churches, charities and community groups to take the next step in their social action.'

#### - Transforming Communities Together: Tyne to Tweed

'Bringing people together around wellbeing, which we've done across the diocese has been important. We have also really improved our relationship with the diocese with a conscious effort that has been made by us and met by people in the diocese and at a senior management level. We are more firmly embedded now and better recognised for it.'

#### - Transforming Communities Together

'We received additional income through Near Neighbours to deliver the Government's 'Surge' programme about disseminating information on Covid-19 and vaccinations to different communities. This was a concentrated piece of work but was very successful in increasing TCT's reach amongst a range of faith groups as well as brokering new relationship with NHS Black Country and consolidating TCT's reputation as a trusted partner amongst Local Authorities.'

### Increased food security

#### - Transforming Lives Together

'Our 'Steps to Recovery' Project in which we supported 30 churches to deliver food and hot meals to over 3,000 people.'

#### - Transforming Plymouth Together

'The main focuses for TPT over the last 12 months has been Feast of Fun, with thousands of children receiving meals via churches through activities, event days and food packages.'

#### - Wellsprings Together

'We supported a church in Leeds to undergo research and community consultation to best meet the needs of their community. Through this they opened a local food bank and built stronger partnerships with local third sector groups.'

#### - Greater Together Manchester

'We're also incredibly proud to have finally launched our pilot Social Super Market in December 2021, just in time for Christmas. By the end of December 2021, we already had over 100 members, and we had saved our members more than £9,090 in food costs in just the first month, including on their Christmas Dinner (which they were able to get from us for just £4). In this first month we also diverted more than 3,000 kg of excess food from landfill.'

# Direction of the network

The Together Network Core members delivered projects in 2021 to address significant issues across England. The successes of the network are informed by its members who each bring an understanding of their local context and an awareness of the challenges faced.

Over the last year key Network activities address the themes of:

- Loneliness
- Community cohesion
- Financial inclusion
- Food Poverty

## Responses



**99** Food banks or food pantries supported

**27,603** Food parcels delivered by the Together network or organisations they are supporting

**356** Places of Welcome in Together Network areas

*Other areas include: Homelessness, Mental health, Asylum seekers and refugees, Modern slavery, Grief support, Dementia friendly churches, Early Years, Racial Justice, Environmental Care, Disability and inclusion, Covid-19 Surge funding, Isolation.*



# Stories of hope from the Network

## **Social inclusion, building confidence, equipping- Together for Change Coventry & Warwickshire**

Nuneaton Saints have a lad with autism/moderate learning difficulties who came to us for work experience once a week.

Whereas previously his experience of catering has been largely limited to washing pots in the back room, he has gained the confidence to prepare sandwiches and serve food in the café where he now talks to customers. His support worker no longer feels he needs her to be closely supervising him. This is so helpful in developing his life skills, such as feeding himself and mixing with wider group of people.

Our role has been to provide work experience for people like this individual in a welcoming, safe environment.

## **Building relationships, equipping, social inclusion- Transforming Communities Together**

Social isolation has been a key issue in the pandemic, and restrictions meant that all Places of Welcome venues needed to close. Throughout the early part of 2021 the Places of Welcome team worked to maintain contact with all venue co-ordinators and offered a range of training programmes to help them meet the needs of their communities when they were allowed to open; these included mental health awareness, financial wellbeing, grief and loss and dementia awareness. As restrictions were eased, intensive support was given to allow venues to open safely. Throughout the year, there was a great deal of interest from new places wanting to open a Place of Welcome as well as existing ones wanting to re-open. The Modern Slavery Campaign, in conjunction with Lichfield Diocese Mothers' Union, continued its very successful training and awareness sessions. Throughout the 2 years of work on this, 3,000 people have been on these courses and the training has received national recognition.

# Stories of hope from the Network

## **Building relationships, equipping, financial inclusion- Transforming Lives Together**

Quote from volunteer at church- 'A call from a desperate young woman led us to deliver weekly food parcels. She received an invitation to join our CAP Life Skills group... the first time in a few years she had had adult conversation with anyone other than her very poorly partner. They have a young daughter and were facing eviction from their home.

Coming to Life Skills gave her hope, led to restoration of relationship with family. The family are still in receipt of food parcels but looking forward to being awarded an adapted house so the partner can manage better. The family have attended Messy Church a few times, the Start Course and planned a Christening. Her mum has joined the Church connected walking group too.'

## **Diversity, financial inclusion, community cohesion- Transforming Plymouth Together**

An elderly UKME man attended a community café, where he had previously felt he would not be welcomed at because he did not see other people from UKME communities attend. The café in question had purposefully made changes to their volunteer team to address a lack of diversity being represented as a response to local residents feedback via the Community Connector.

By attending the café and building a rapport with the Connector who was visiting the site on that day, the man was able to share he was struggling with his housing and benefits. The Connector was able to work with the volunteers to signpost the man to agencies who were able to support him with his specific needs.

# Supporting Churches

A key aspect of the Together Network is connecting with churches and other community organisations during these difficult times, providing resources, signposting and the support they need to have real impact in their communities.

**Over the last year key support for churches has included:**

**Signposting to resources**

**Brokering partnerships**

**Fundraising support**

**Project design**



## **Other areas include:**

**Networking opportunities, Thematic workshop delivery, Joint campaigning/advocacy, Feast of Fun funding and support, Engaging new initiatives (Places of Welcome, Food Pantries), Capacity Building, Toolkits, Research into community needs, General friend support**

*Accessible support for churches*

*Churches supported in 2021 inclusive but not limited to Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, URC, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, Independent, YWAM; Refugee Church, Newfrontiers, Caritas, Unitarian.*





# Support for churches in 2021

## **Together Leicester-**

*'A local church with little or no contact with the surrounding community now has a thriving food pantry. Mrs A has three children and a disabled husband. She works few hours a week. They can't manage the living cost. They have been struggling a lot. A food pantry we helped set up has given them a breathing space and has helped them to buy other essentials for their children.'*

## **Transformation Cornwall-**

*'St Stephens the Martyr Church is a beautiful, Grade 1 listed church in the Parish of Launceston in East Cornwall. The team at the church became aware of the water dripping through to the pews a number of years ago. However, when the roof started to leak & successive winters didn't bring an improvement, the team got in touch. Transformation Cornwall helped with securing the funds and ongoing support with planning and delivery. We also helped them work through an understanding of the importance of the church building as a place of community, and the community benefit of the building, thereby increasing the strength of the funding applications, but also the social value of the building and roof they were fixing.'*

## **Thrive Together Birmingham-**

*'An independent community organisation had been operating in a church, which is in a significantly disadvantaged neighbourhood, but found themselves in financial difficulties which led to them cancelling their lease of the church hall. The church leader and PCC were very concerned about the loss of activities that were being delivered from their premises but felt that they lacked the capacity to fill the gap. Thrive team members have supported them to develop a new vision and set up a Place of Welcome, secure resources to employ a Development Worker with older adults, deal with issues relating to the previous occupants and identified organisations who are interested in becoming new tenants. A foundation has now been laid for the future.'*

# Feedback from churches



## TOGETHER FOR CHANGE COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE ⊕

### Feedback from Matt Jermyn on TFC's support

*The opportunity to use the church hall for the food project came up when the church had only three PCC members, no congregation and no vicar. Without TFC's support it would have simply been impossible. With their help we have a refurbished church hall and (more importantly) the church is serving the community, building relationships and has a base from which to build wider ministry in the parish."*

## IMAGINE NORFOLK TOGETHER ⊕

*"Thank you so much for this email and invitation. So grateful to you for taking this lead."*

**(Church Community Lead on meet up for local church community project leads)**

*"Thank you SO MUCH for all you have given Anna"*

**(Church Leader regarding work on COP26)**

*"I think that went REALLY well! Hope you did too - thanks so much for collaborating on it with me!"*

**(Acts 435 Partnerships Director on jointly run Acts 435 introduction session for churches)**

## TRANSFORMING NOTTS TOGETHER ⊕

*"For me there are definitely opportunities that have arisen as a result of the pandemic and post pandemic recovery. The greatest one being how the churches have pulled together and instead of working in silos we have joined forces together and sharing our resources. Relationships between churches and Christian charities have improved tremendously and there does not appear to be 'us' and 'them' but rather 'us all together'. I am definitely exploring these avenues to see who we can partner with and who would like to partner with us. At the moment all the people I have connected with has been through CAN."*

**Linda (Trent Vineyard)**



# Funding secured by the Network in 2021 includes:

Funding secured for the work of the Together Network:

**£1,919,689**

Funding secured by the Together Network for other organisations:

**£2,014,650**



## Other benefits of Network membership in 2021 include:

*"Working together with other members and CUF on initiatives, notably Building Food Security and the joint funding bid related to that."*

*"Receiving the regular newsletter. Knowing that advice is at hand when needed - as recently with GDPR."*

*"Support, particularly in regards to website and branding. Credibility and being part of a larger organisation."*

*"Peer support, learning from others. We have gone through a restructure and focusing of our strategy this year and the relationships within the network have been helpful for this."*

**Find out more information about the work of the Together Network at:**

**<https://togethernetnetwork.org.uk/>**